

# Traveling with Someone with Alzheimer's Disease (AD)

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At some point, traveling with your loved one who has Alzheimer's or a related dementia may not be possible. Talk with your doctor and service providers as well as your family prior to planning a trip. Here are some tips for traveling.

- **Keep things as familiar as possible.** Travel during the day when you are normally awake. Keep meal times as close to normal as possible. Make sure your loved one has items that are familiar such as a favorite pair of pajamas or a favorite tea before bed.
- **Be prepared.** Get plenty of rest before the trip. Allow extra time for everything; bathing, dressing, packing, getting to the airport. Wear comfortable clothing. Bring a brief medical history and enough medication for your trip. Bring along cards that indicate your loved has dementia to hand out if needed.
- **Plan your itinerary well in advance.** Make sure you have plenty of time between layovers if layovers are needed. Make sure family and friends know about the diagnosis and what symptoms to look for. Minimize time spent in large, noisy groups if possible.
- **Be realistic.** Carefully assess what the person's limitations and strengths are as well as your own. Can you handle the person if they become agitated, wander or can't sleep? Consult with your physician and see if he or she recommends a medication for the trip.
- **Limit the length of a plane or car ride.** If your trip is a long one, a layover for a good night sleep may be needed to stay on normal time. Sleep deprivation can cause disorientation and confusion which can then lead to agitation. Travel during normal "awake" hours. Bring along things that the person enjoys doing. Carry hand wipes for any spills. Avoid caffeine.
- **If you are driving** and the person with ADRD becomes agitated, pull over. Do not try to calm him or her while driving. He or she may become more agitated and try to leave a moving car if judgment is impaired.

## Traveling with AD

- **If you are traveling by air** try to avoid layovers in busy airports and use non-stop flights. If the person wanders, plan to sit in the aisle seat so you are aware if he/she tries to get up. Try to be seated near a restroom. Bring all medications with you on the plane, not in your checked luggage. Notify attendants of your loved one's diagnosis.
- **If you are staying in a hotel**, stay away from sliding glass doors. Request a childproof doorknob cover or see if the hotel has a latch on the door if the person wanders. Request a room away from conference rooms or elevators where things tend to be noisier.
- **Have a backup plan.** This way you can react without getting upset if mishaps occur. Recognize when you loved one is becoming agitated or upset and stop any activities you are doing. It may be necessary to get some rest.